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Metaphor, discourse dynamics and register: applications to written descriptions of mental health problems

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Abstract: Discursive approaches to metaphor recognize that different social contexts and discourse activities will influence metaphor use. Using a descriptive text written by a participant with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as a case study, we demonstrate how, in a research context, metaphors do not only serve a representational function but they can also build relationships between the researcher and the participant, create a persuasive piece of writing and construct multiple identities. Through an analysis of metaphors and their surrounding, non-metaphorical co-text, it is thus argued that studies exploring metaphor in elicited research data need to integrate considerations of the research context into their analyses to a greater extent. We also show how a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor can be combined with a systemic-functional approach to register in order to capture both the discursive functions of metaphors and their emergence as the text progresses.

Keywords: discourse dynamics, metaphor, systemic-functional grammar, register, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), case study

1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, the dominant approach to metaphor has been from a cognitive perspective, arguing that metaphors in language are realizations of stable, conceptual metaphors in the mind (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002). In this cognitive paradigm, metaphors are reflective; that is, the way we talk about one thing in terms of another reflects the way we think about one thing in terms of another. More recent research, however,

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has investigated how metaphors are influenced by the discourse activities in which they are used (e.g. Cameron 2010; Deignan et al. 2013; Demmen et al. 2015; Semino et al. 2017). Discursive approaches to metaphor have largely grown out of the difficulties researchers faced when applying conceptual metaphor theory to real-world data (for an edited collection on these issues, see Zanutto et al. 2008). In contrast to many cognitive studies, discourse studies recognize that metaphors do not occur in language in tidy sentences or utterances that can be removed from their context for analysis. Rather, the reality of metaphors is a messy and difficult one that should be embraced rather than avoided (Gibbs Jr. 2010).

In this paper, we aim to show how a discourse dynamics approach to metaphor (Cameron and Deignan 2006; Cameron 2007a; Cameron 2007b; Cameron et al. 2009) can be usefully combined with a systemic-functional approach to register and social context (Halliday 1978; Martin and Rose 2003; Nunan 2008) in order to produce an analysis of metaphors in written texts that is both sensitive to the development of metaphors as the discourse progresses and allows a focus on the discursive functions of the metaphors.

Although recent research by metaphor scholars has begun to explore the discursive functions of metaphor (Koller 2003; Deignan et al. 2013; Demmen et al. 2015; Semino et al. 2017), the majority of metaphor studies within the field of health largely focus on metaphors as a device to represent illness experiences. Using a description of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) written by a participant with the disorder as a case study, we aim to demonstrate that metaphors used in extended descriptions of OCD do not merely serve as a representation of experiences but that they also construct an identity as a person with OCD, create a persuasive piece of writing and provide the text with structure. Additionally, by analyzing metaphors and their surrounding, non-metaphorical co-text, it is shown how participants orient their language towards the research context. We thus argue for the importance of health research to consider how metaphors in elicited research data (e.g. in interviews, diaries and written tasks) are not only used to represent and describe illness experiences but how they also position the writer/speaker within the discourse context of a research project.

We begin by discussing research on metaphors in discourse, focusing on the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor, the systemic-functional approach to register and the advantages of combining these frameworks for an analysis of metaphor in written texts. We also overview the existing research on metaphor use by people with OCD before moving onto the methods, data analysis and findings of our study.

2 Metaphors in discourse

In discourse studies, it is argued that one function of metaphors is to serve as a framing device that can reproduce and enable understandings, perceptions and responses to events or discourse topics (Ritchie and Cameron 2014; Semino et al. 2016). For example, framing the handling of diseases as a “war” has, over time, become a culturally stable discourse metaphor that not only represents diseases as needing to be fought, but also influences emotive public responses to disease and government decisions on policy (Zinken et al. 2008). Studies have demonstrated the framing function of metaphors both through spoken interaction (e.g. Cameron 2003; Cameron 2007b) and with large-scale corpora (e.g. Charteris-Black 2004; Demmen et al. 2015; Semino et al. 2017). However, the growing bank of discourse-based research also explores why metaphor patterns occur in certain genres, with reference to the identities and roles of the addressers and addressees, the goals of the discourse, the local co-text and the broader social context (e.g. Knudsen 2003; Skorczynska and Deignan 2006; Deignan et al. 2013; Demmen et al. 2015; Semino et al. 2017). Much of this research, particularly that of the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor (e.g. Cameron 2007a; Cameron 2007b), also takes into account the collaborative nature of spoken interaction. The focus of discourse research is thus on the communicative purpose that metaphors perform, meaning that metaphor is regarded not only as representational but also as functional and emergent in the discourse. Taking a discursive approach to metaphor in this study therefore means that we consider metaphor at the level of the text rather than as reflective of internal workings of the mind.¹

2.1 Discourse dynamics approach to metaphor

Recent research has emphasized that metaphors in spoken language are shaped by “the body’s continuous interactions with the world, including other people” (Gibbs Jr. and Cameron 2008: 65). From this perspective, metaphor performance is shaped in part by immediate social processes and, as such, metaphors emerge from nonlinear interactions within a dynamical system rather than solely being a static result of cognitive mechanisms (Gibbs Jr. and Cameron 2008). Focusing on this immediacy of metaphor production, the discourse dynamics framework is an interactional approach to metaphor construction in spoken language

¹ We thus use the term “metaphor” to refer to metaphors in language rather than realizations of conceptual metaphors in thought.

(Cameron and Deignan 2006; Cameron 2007a; Cameron 2007b; Cameron et al. 2009). The approach analyzes metaphors as “processual, emergent and open to change” as the flow of talk is negotiated between speakers, thus emphasizing that metaphors emerge collaboratively from the interaction and will be dependent on the unfolding sequence of turns (Cameron et al. 2009: 67). Metaphors can therefore allow a shared framing of events or ideas to be constructed in the discourse across speakers (Cameron et al. 2009). In addition to a framing function, the discourse dynamics approach also acknowledges that metaphor is dialogic and is “designed for other people and for particular discourse purposes” (Cameron and Deignan 2006: 676). From this viewpoint, metaphors do not only communicate representational content, but also express attitudes and build relationships.

It is also possible to apply the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor to written data (Cameron 2007a; Cameron 2010). Firstly, we can see written data as dialogic in that it is normally written for an idealized or imagined reader (Cameron 2010). Secondly, while the final text may be edited and lacking in spontaneity, we can analyze written data as unfolding sequentially and as a progression through an episode of discourse (Cameron et al. 2009). For these reasons, discourse dynamics is a useful framework when investigating how metaphors in written texts can build relationships between writers and readers, and can provide structure to a stretch of discourse.

2.2 Metaphor and the systemic-functional approach to register

It should be noted that the term “metaphor” is used in this study to refer to linguistic metaphors (i.e. where aspects of one domain are mapped onto another) rather than grammatical metaphors that form part of the systemic-functional grammar (SFG) framework (Halliday 1978; Halliday and Hasan 1985). Where metaphors perform a representational or descriptive function, they would be considered within SFG to be performing part of the ideational metafunction of language as they help to realize the field of the discourse. In other words, metaphors can describe who and what the text is about. For the majority of discourse metaphor studies, the linguistic analysis resides in this representational function of metaphors (see Goatly 1997; Deignan et al. 2013).

However, in SFG, there are two metafunctions of language in addition to the ideational metafunction: the interpersonal metafunction and the textual metafunction (Halliday 1978). The interpersonal metafunction realizes the tenor, that is, the relationships between the participants and the social identities in the

discourse. Metaphors can serve an interpersonal function through, for example, creating a sense of community or expressing attitudes (e.g. Semino et al. 2017). The textual metafunction realizes the mode of the text, meaning that language organizes the discourse at the level of the text. Metaphors can contribute to the textual metafunction by creating structure and cohesion; for example, studies have explored how clusters of metaphors can fulfill certain rhetorical functions such as grabbing attention (Koller 2003) and putting across a point of view (Cameron and Stelma 2004). These functions can vary depending on the position of the cluster in the text (Koller 2003).

When the three metafunctions of ideational, interpersonal and textual are considered simultaneously, we have what is called the register of the text (Halliday and Hasan 1985; Martin and Rose 2003; Nunan 2008). Varying one or more of the metafunctions will alter the register and thus the linguistic patterns, including the patterns of metaphors (Goatly 1997; Deignan et al. 2013; Semino et al. 2013). Additionally, register explains why the same metaphors can be used in different social contexts for different communicative functions (Knudsen 2003; Semino et al. 2013; Demmen et al. 2015). For example, Demmen and colleagues (2015) report differences in use of violence metaphors for cancer depending on genre (e.g. an online forum compared to interviews) and social role (e.g. patient, family carer or health professional). In the current study, participants were asked to write a descriptive piece about their experiences of OCD. Thus, when analyzing register, the field is OCD, the tenor is a relationship between the research participant and the researcher, and the mode is a written, descriptive piece. The metaphors will inevitably be shaped by these metafunctions, and the analysis in this study takes these three aspects of register into account.

Additionally, as register is not a framework that is specific to metaphor, we apply it to both metaphorical language and its non-metaphorical co-text in order to investigate metaphors in their immediate linguistic environment. We thus follow previous studies that have considered metaphors and non-metaphorical text as working together in order to achieve the discourse goals (e.g. Goatly 1997; Cameron et al. 2009; Deignan et al. 2013). Combining this broader application of register with the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor also allows metaphors to be explored as embedded within the sequential flow of discourse.

2.3 Metaphors and mental health

There has been some application of metaphor analysis to first-person experiences of mental health problems, much of which has focused on experiences

of depression (e.g. Levitt et al. 2000; McMullen and Conway 2002; Semino 2008; Charteris-Black 2012). In our study, we focus on OCD, which is a severe mental health problem characterized by unwanted thoughts that cause significant distress and/or repetitive compulsions performed to reduce this distress (American Psychiatric Association 2013). To date, very little research has investigated metaphor use by people with OCD. However, a couple of studies have noted that, for people with OCD, thoughts and the mind tend to be externalized from the self and often personified. For example, one study that conducted written interviews with people with OCD found that the disorder was commonly represented as separate from the self in phrases such as “it’s not me, it’s my OCD” and “OCD was making me do all kinds of stupid things” (Fennell and Liberato 2007: 322). Additionally, OCD was represented metaphorically as a “shark”, “a nightmare” or as an entity that attacks the person from the outside (Fennell and Liberato 2007: 322). While a “shark” is arguably a stronger metaphor for OCD than a “nightmare”, both of these metaphors construct OCD as an external entity that has the ability to exert considerable force upon and overpower the self.

Additionally, a recent study by Campbell and Longhurst (2013) found that postings on online forums and blog posts by men tended to position OCD as an external entity that needed to be fought (e.g. “impossible to beat”, “tired of fighting there [sic] self [sic]”) (Campbell and Longhurst 2013: 89). The authors argue that, while this framing can imbue the self with a sense of agency, it can also lead to a sense of failure if OCD is experienced as the stronger entity that is undefeatable. They also found that OCD is often framed as a journey (e.g. “my journey through OCD”, “I’m at a crossroads”), which tended to be used by women rather than men (Campbell and Longhurst 2013: 87). In this framing, the self and the disorder are represented more holistically and the sharp division of OCD from the self is not so apparent.

While the above studies on OCD analyze metaphor as reflective of experience, they generally overlook the interpersonal or textual functions of metaphor. For example, Campbell and Longhurst (2013) use online forum data to show how OCD is represented as a disorder that needs to be separate from the self in order to be “fought.” However, there is little exploration of how the metaphors may also be building relationships between participants in the online forum, appealing to a wider public audience, organizing the language into a suitable structure for online interaction, or performing further functions such as persuading, supporting or requesting help. These considerations become even more important when the data have been collected in somewhat artificial contexts such as research interviews, focus groups and written samples (e.g. diaries, tasks). In these research contexts, the metaphors produced are serving very different

functions to if they had been produced on a social network, in a conversation with friends, or in a therapy session. For example, the interpersonal metafunction will be working to manage the relationship between the participant and the researcher (and any other participants) and, in a written task, the textual metafunction will be working to structure a coherent piece of writing. We argue that the metaphors produced in the research context are an integral part of these language metafunctions, not a separate linguistic feature to be extracted and considered in isolation.

3 Methods

3.1 Recruitment

Two leading OCD charities in the United Kingdom were contacted to help with recruitment: OCD Action and OCD-UK. Both charities uploaded an advert onto their websites, and then potential participants contacted the researcher directly. Participants had to be aged 18 or over and able to speak English fluently. The recruitment process did not target particular genders, age ranges or subtypes of OCD. While every participant did have a clinical diagnosis of OCD, participants were not excluded if they had diagnoses of additional mental health problems (e.g. depression) because comorbid mental health problems are common with OCD. Following this process, 15 participants with OCD (10 women, 5 men; age range 23–56) were recruited between July 2011 and December 2011. The study was granted ethical approval by the King's College London Social Sciences, Humanities and Law research ethics subcommittee (Ref: SSHL/10/11-4).

3.2 Data collection

The participants completed an open-ended written task that had the following instructions:

Please describe one episode of OCD that you experienced as particularly severe and upsetting. You might like to include details about the situation (e.g. who you were with, where you were), what aspects of the situation started the OCD episode, your thoughts, your actions and your emotions at the time.

Participants were asked to spend a minimum of 20 minutes on the task, but no upper time limit was set; participants were also asked to note down how long they spent on the task. The task was carried out in the participants' own time

and could be either hand written or typed. Participants were informed about the requirements of the research task before being asked to give written consent to participate. All data were anonymized and pseudonyms were used at all stages.

3.3 Data analysis

The methods of identifying and coding metaphors in this study largely draw on the discourse dynamics approach (Cameron et al. 2009). Following Cameron (2003), we use the following terminology: “topic” refers to the domain being represented and “topic term” refers to the realization of that topic in language. Likewise, “vehicle” refers to the semantic domain being drawn on to structure the metaphor, and “vehicle term” is the realization of that vehicle in language.

3.3.1 Identifying metaphors

Metaphors were identified based on the detection of potential vehicle terms. In line with the Pragglejaz Group (2007), vehicle terms are “the words or phrases that [...] have some other meaning that is more basic in some way and that contributes to the meaning in context through comparison” (Cameron et al. 2009: 71). Instead of creating lists of search terms related to potentially important vehicles, such as *JOURNEYS* or *BATTLES* (e.g. Koller 2003), our analysis was driven by a bottom-up approach (e.g. Pragglejaz Group 2007; Steen et al. 2010; Demmen et al. 2015) that identifies all potential metaphors regardless of the vehicle term used.

While the metaphor identification procedure of the Pragglejaz Group (2007) checks the metaphorical basis of every word, we followed Cameron and colleagues (2009) by identifying vehicle terms, which may be individual words or phrases. For example, the clause “unholy forces might take over my mind” contains the vehicle term “take over”. While this is two individual words, it was categorized as one metaphor to maintain the semantic meaning of the phrasal verb. In some cases, one vehicle term could provide two metaphors. For example, the clause “the things that trigger OCD for me” contains one vehicle term “trigger” but two possible topic terms: “the things” and “OCD”. The clause was therefore categorized as containing two metaphors, one for each topic term (see also Figure 1 for further examples).

The categorization as a vehicle term (i.e. as part of a metaphor rather than as a literal meaning) was determined by checking words against their basic

meaning in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and by drawing on the in-depth knowledge of the first coder who had previously worked extensively with data from interviews with people with OCD. For this study, we decided to include metaphors that are constructed through conventionalized words and phrases as well as novel metaphors. However, following Cameron and colleagues (2009), we did exclude the delexicalized verbs *have*, *do* and *get*.

The metaphors were identified by the first coder, who then passed a sample of 10% of the metaphors to the second coder. Disagreements about the metaphorical nature of vehicle terms and their basic meanings were resolved by consulting the British National Corpus to check for common usage of the terms. Metaphors identified within the entire data set were then re-visited to ensure consistency of identification.

3.3.2 Coding the metaphorical expressions

The next step was to code the vehicle terms and the topic terms into vehicles and topics, respectively (Figure 1). To do so, we transferred the metaphors into an Excel spreadsheet along with their clause number, the vehicle term and the topic term (also Figure 1). While topic terms are not always present in

Clause no.	Clause	Vehicle Term	Vehicles	Topic Term	Topic
1	it's actually kind of <u>hard</u> to do this	hard	TEXTURE (MISC.)	this	TASK (MISC.)
7	the panic that <u>sets in</u> with OCD	sets in	MOVEMENT-BEGIN	the panic	EMOTION
7	the panic that <u>sets in</u> with OCD	in	CONTAINER	-	SELF
8	my brain kind of freezes up	freezes up	MOVEMENT-END, TEMPERATURE	my brain	BRAIN/MIND/HEAD
12	the things that <u>trigger</u> OCD for me	trigger	MOVEMENT-BEGIN, MACHINERY	the things	ENVIRONMENT
12	the things that <u>trigger</u> OCD for me	trigger	MOVEMENT-BEGIN, MACHINERY	OCD	OCD
13	is kind of scary <u>on</u> that <u>level</u>	on... level	LOCATION, POSITION	(the idea of thinking about)	THOUGHTS
14	many of my obsessions are actually <u>based around</u> irrational fears...	based around	FORM (MISC.)	my obsessions	THOUGHTS
15	unholy forces might <u>take over</u> my mind	take over	TRANSFER (MISC.)	my mind	BRAIN/MIND/HEAD

Figure 1: Examples of metaphor coding. In all examples, vehicle terms are underlined, topic terms are in bold and, following Cameron (2007a), vehicles and topics are in small, italicised capitals.

discourse (Cameron et al. 2009), in this selection of texts, most metaphors did explicitly contain the topic term and so the topic was relatively straightforward to identify. Vehicle terms were coded according to their basic semantic content and by using reference to previous literature that has discussed common source domains (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980). As the amount of texts we analyzed was small, there was often not enough evidence to determine the specific vehicle that a vehicle term should belong to. Therefore, we coded vehicle terms according to all their possible vehicles and, where subsequent analysis still did not point towards one particular vehicle, we classified the vehicle terms at the highest schematic level in order to cover all the possible vehicles. For example, the metaphor “the things that trigger OCD for me” could have a vehicle of *MACHINERY* or *MOVEMENT*, but was finally classified as *MOVEMENT* at a schematic level as there were not enough examples to justify a more specific categorization of *MACHINERY*. Thus, the final vehicle categorizations often represent “vehicle groups” that contain multiple possible vehicles. Any vehicles and topics that occurred three times fewer in total were grouped into a *MISCELLANEOUS* category. Once again, the codes were developed by the first coder, who then examined and cross-checked the codes with the second coder.

3.3.3 Patterns of metaphors

Due to the highly heterogeneous nature of OCD, it was felt that grouping together the metaphors used by all participants would obscure the very individual experiences of the disorder. Thus, it was not our aim to discern broad, quantitative patterns of metaphor use across the whole collection of texts. Instead, we deal with individual texts as coherent units to examine whether there are linguistic patterns of metaphor development at a text level.

By adapting a visualization method from Cameron and Stelma (2004) that allows clusters of metaphors in the text to become visible, a graph was created for each text that plotted the occurrence of topics against their clause numbers. While Cameron and Stelma (2004) plot vehicle groups, we plot topics to ensure that the vehicle groups can remain open to multiple interpretations. Clustering of metaphors in the text can be visualized regardless of whether it is the vehicle or the topic that is plotted. We define a metaphor cluster as stretches of text where the number of metaphors is more than 50 % of the number of clauses, running from the beginning of the main clause containing the first metaphor to the end of the main clause containing the final metaphor.

3.3.4 Register

As noted, the meaning of metaphors in discourse cannot be dislocated from their surrounding co-text (Goatly 1997). Thus, we analyzed linguistic realizations of register throughout the entire text, not only within the metaphors. In a register analysis, metaphor identification and coding comes under the umbrella of the ideational metafunction of language. To complete the analysis of the ideational metafunction, we also analyzed non-metaphorical lexical sets in order to discern the portrayal of people and entities within the text (Halliday 1978). Metaphor distribution relates to the textual metafunction, and so we also examined cohesion, orthography and metadiscourse in order to explore textual structure in more detail (Halliday 1978). Finally, we analyzed the interpersonal metafunction of language through close attention to expressions of stance and use of modality (Halliday 1978).

4 Results and discussion

The participants’ written responses ranged from 244 to 1,970 words (Table 1), with an average of 822 words. The participants stated that they wrote from 18 to 55 minutes. Metaphor density (i.e. the number of metaphors per 1,000 words) ranged

Table 1: No. metaphors per participant.

Pt.	Total no. metaphors	Total no. words	Metaphor density (/1000 words)
Matt	59	484	121.9
Ben	36	411	87.6
Lucy	143	1,970	72.6
Vicky	105	1,459	72.0
Kelly	17	244	69.7
Michael	50	731	68.4
Gary	35	565	61.9
Clive	31	568	54.6
Susan	60	1,113	53.9
Deana	20	392	51.0
Michelle	53	1,138	46.6
Sarah	18	392	45.9
Jessica	38	959	39.6
Nicola	34	886	38.4
Angela	29	1,018	28.5

from 28.5 to 121.9 (Table 1), with an average of 60.8. The figures in Table 1 are given per participant to allow patterns at the individual level to be discerned.

One text, written by Michael, is presented here as a case study. Michael's text was selected as the metaphor topics within it cover a variety of aspects of OCD rather than focusing on, for example, the mind or thoughts in isolation. We explore how the metaphors and other linguistic features used by Michael not only describe his experiences of OCD, but they also serve additional functions such as building relationships with the reader, constructing an identity as a person with OCD and persuading the reader of the severity of his experiences. Michael's text is reproduced here; for reasons of anonymity, a section of 57 words has not been printed, but has been included in the analysis. The metaphors are numbered and indicated in square brackets. Vehicle terms are underlined and topic terms (where present) are in bold. As a summary, Michael's text is 731 words long (126 clauses) and contains 50 metaphors, giving a metaphor density of 68.4 (see also Table 1).

4.1 Michael's text

- (1) Honestly, [¹it's actually kind of hard to do **this**], as once I start to think about what incident I could write about, I can feel [²⁺³**the panic** that sets in with **OCD**] and [⁴**my brain** kind of freezes up] and I'm not sure what incident I could choose. The idea of thinking about [⁵⁺⁶**the things** that trigger **OCD** for me] is kind of scary [⁷on that level], as [⁸many of **my obsessions** are actually based around irrational fears] that [⁹unholy forces might take over **my mind**] if [¹⁰I make **contact** with them] [¹¹in **my thoughts**], which I understand is quite common [¹²in **OCD people**] – so it's scary enough just to think about [¹³**incidents** that I've been through]. I can think of one example that might be particularly helpful. I was living in a student house [¹⁴in **my fourth year**] at university. It wasn't a particularly good idea to live there – I remember it as a big grey house and it was always dark and my room seemed very harsh and uncomfortable, and I'd unwisely agreed to live with a couple of people who [¹⁵⁺¹⁶on a fundamental level **I just didn't get on with**], but who in particular had characteristics which related to [¹⁷⁺¹⁸some triggers for **my OCD**]. I agreed to live with them because I didn't have a very strong sense of who I wanted to live with, and was still trying to be [¹⁹all things to all people] and [²⁰in quite a theoretical **sense**] be Friendly and Social and Easy to Get On With – and I didn't want to cause offense [²¹by backing out later] once I'd started to feel

[²²⁺²³on an intuitive level that **it wasn't such a good idea**]. There were several housemates – one said she was a witch. Out of all of them, she was probably most likely to actually be able to do anything that had [²⁴any real consequences in a new agey, magic **sense**], and she could be kind and sociable but could also [²⁵be quite spikey] and difficult to get on with ...

[57 words (including 1 metaphor) removed]

... but I didn't do anything about this or just think, “fuck it,” and [²⁷⁺²⁸cut my ties] or anything because I was ultimately scared of them – I was scared that although their beliefs were clearly childish and deluded, [²⁹there might be some power behind them] which they essentially didn't understand, and if I upset them or anything they might cause me harm through it – and ultimately I hadn't accepted the idea that [³⁰I could cut my friendship with someone] [³¹at that stage], I believed that that would have meant I'd failed socially and [³²to live up to **my obligations**] to be kind to the world and non-judgemental and [³³put other people first], and it would mean [³⁴I was giving in to anger and short-sighted destructive impulses]. And ultimately I was scared that they were bringing dark spirits into the house – and [³⁵**the hill** behind the house felt bad and angry] and imposing. So I was pretty scared for most of the time there, and [³⁶low] because it was the winter and I have SAD (although I didn't know that then) so winters were always difficult, and I was doing my fourth year at university so [³⁷I was under a lot of stress].

As mentioned, it's [³⁹⁺⁴⁰**ideas** [³⁸in my head] that spark OCD behaviour most], [⁴¹⁺⁴²and **pictures** too] – and with all this going on then I was very scared that [⁴³**my brain** would be taken over] or [⁴⁴**my soul** lost] if [⁴⁵I made any contact] [⁴⁶in my mind] with what my housemates did or what they made me think about or the hill behind the house (just thinking about it or [⁴⁷giving any attention to it] while [⁴⁸not consciously “holding myself back”] while I was doing so felt like I was connected to it somehow). And the way I have always had a compulsion to respond to this sort of fear about my thoughts is to try [⁴⁹to fix positive pictures] [⁵⁰in my mind], instead of pictures associated with the things I wasn't wanting to think about.

4.2 Ideational metafunction

In terms of the representational nature of the metaphors in his text, Michael uses metaphors to describe the key aspects of his OCD episode. As such, the most

frequent metaphor topics are his *THOUGHTS* ($n=9$), *SOCIAL RELATIONS* ($n=8$), *OCD* ($n=6$) and *MIND* ($n=6$) (Table 2). Michael's experiences of OCD are represented at a broad, schematic level by the repeated vehicle groups of *MOVEMENT* ($n=16$), *LOCATION/POSITION* ($n=10$) and *CONTAINER* ($n=9$) (Table 2). The *MOVEMENT* vehicle group not only accounts for the highest number of metaphors, but is also the only vehicle group that is used with every topic in the text.

Table 2: Topics and vehicle groups in Michael's text.

Topic	Vehicle group								Total (column %)	
	MOVEMENT (n)		CONTAINER (n)		LOCATION/ POSITION (n)		MISC.* (n)			
THOUGHTS	3		1		3		2		9	18.0
SOCIAL RELATIONS	1		–		4		3		8	16.0
OCD	5		1		–		–		6	12.0
MIND	1		3		–		2		6	12.0
SELF	1		1		1		1		4	8.0
ENVIRONMENT	2		–		–		2		4	8.0
EMOTIONS	2		–		2		–		4	8.0
MISCELLANEOUS**	1		3		–		5		9	18.0
Total (row %)	16	32.0	9	18.0	10	20.0	15	30.0	50	100.0

*The MISCELLANEOUS vehicle group contains 7 different vehicles. **The MISCELLANEOUS topic group contains 5 different topics.

The metaphors structured by the *MOVEMENT* vehicle group primarily represent Michael's OCD and his *THOUGHTS* as being forced into and out of various states of activity. For example, metaphors 39 and 40 (“it's **ideas** in my head that **spark OCD behaviour** most”) present the onset of OCD episodes as driven by ideas, and metaphor 4 (“**my brain** kind of **freezes up**”) presents his brain as being prevented from functioning by OCD and the associated panic. As noted, the vehicle terms here can also belong to more specific vehicles of *TEMPERATURE* or *MACHINERY*, but they are semantically related at a schematic level of *MOVEMENT*. At this broader level, then, Michael draws on ideas of forceful movement to represent his experiences of OCD as dynamic.

As the writing progresses, the repeated use of the *MOVEMENT* vehicle group to represent multiple topics within Michael's OCD episode creates a sense of equivalence between the different elements of OCD (see Goatly 1997). Michael therefore presents his OCD episode as full of movement, which primarily occurs within the contained space of his *MIND* (e.g. metaphor 46, “**in my mind**”). Michael's distress

is thus heightened as the space in which he is able to create distance between his self and the frightening, “unholy forces” is ultimately bounded. Michael’s metaphors are also regularly constructed in dense noun phrases (e.g. metaphors 38–42, “ideas in my head that spark OCD behaviour most, and pictures too”), which contribute to the depiction of his thoughts and fears as tangible, forceful entities rather than cognitive processes performed by his self.

Outside of the metaphors in Michael’s text, the lexical sets drawn upon portray his OCD episode as occurring against a background of a dark and threatening location. For example, Michael writes that he was living in “a big grey house” that “was always dark”, behind which there was a hill that “felt bad and angry and imposing”. This menacing tone is reinforced by lexical sets of difficult social relationships (e.g. one housemate is portrayed as “quite spikey and difficult to get on with”) and unwanted magic (e.g. his housemate’s actions could have “consequences” in “a new agey, magic sense”). Michael describes his continued friendship with his housemates as due to the “obligations” he felt to be “kind to the world and non-judgemental”. These descriptions of himself as a morally correct person increase the strength of his metaphors by setting up a stark contrast between his social self and his metaphorically represented, unacceptable thoughts and fears.

4.3 Textual metafunction

Looking at metaphor distribution, Figure 2 shows that Michael’s metaphors form two primary clusters, one in the opening paragraph between metaphors

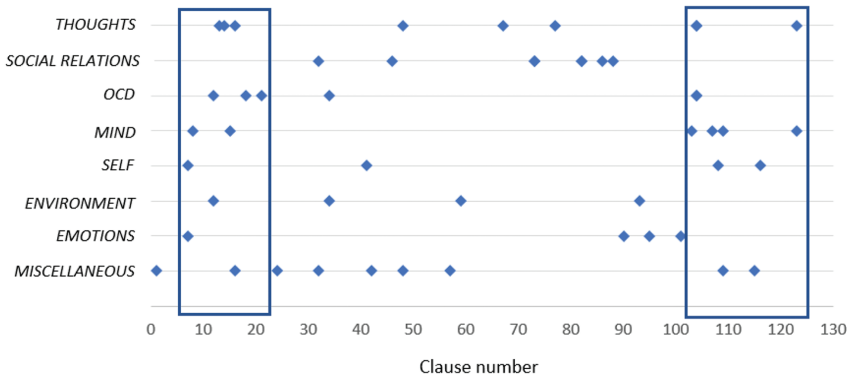


Figure 2: Distribution of metaphors per topic in Michael’s text.

2 and 13 (16 clauses; 12 metaphors), and another in the concluding paragraph, between metaphors 38 and 50 (21 clauses; 13 metaphors) (marked on Figure 2 by boxes). Both these clusters contain the topics of his *MIND*, *THOUGHTS*, *SELF* and *OCD* as Michael introduces and summarizes the content of the text. In the middle of his text, the metaphors do not cluster and they focus more on the topic of *SOCIAL RELATIONS* as Michael describes his relationships with his housemates.

According to Koller (2003), metaphor clusters at the beginning of a text play an ideational metafunction by introducing the subject that will be discussed. The use of the present tense in metaphor cluster one (metaphors 2–13) begins Michael’s text by giving a general overview of his OCD rather than starting with a narrative of one particular episode. Immediately after metaphor cluster one, Michael uses the clause “I was living in a student house”, to signal a switch into a narrative time constructed in past tenses. Once his narrative of the specific OCD episode is completed, Michael uses a second metaphor cluster (metaphors 38–50) to summarize his OCD experiences on a broad scale. The second metaphor cluster cohesively links back to the first cluster by drawing on the same metaphor topics (i.e. *OCD*, *MIND*, *THOUGHTS* and *SELF*), thus consolidating the weight given to these topics in cluster one. The metaphors in cluster two also perform a persuasive function by ending the text on a memorable message that emphasizes the severe nature of his experiences.

In addition to clustering of metaphors, Michael orients towards the written mode of the task through including academic metadiscourse (e.g. “as mentioned”) and explicitly describing the process of choosing “what incident to write about”. Additionally, Michael is creative with his orthography; for example, he states that he was “trying to ... be Friendly and Social and Easy to Get On With”, which again stresses the moral obligation he felt to maintain positive social relationships. Through capitalization, Michael exploits the written mode to reinforce his desired, socially acceptable qualities. Once again, the contrast between his moral values and his distressing thoughts of “unholy forces” is heightened.

4.4 Interpersonal metafunction

Within the text, Michael’s metaphors often function as various identity markers. In particular, Michael includes his emotional reflections on the task in order to build an identity as someone who still suffers from OCD despite the narrative being focused on a past time. For example, metaphor 1 (“it’s actually kind of

hard to do **this**") and metaphor 7 ("is kind of scary on that level") provide a commentary about how the task is affecting his current emotions. Metaphor 12 ("in **OCD people**") also contributes to this identity by positioning Michael as a person who belongs to a community of people who have similar distressing thoughts.

Additionally, through constructing a selection of metaphors using epistemic modal markers, Michael constructs an identity as a rational person who does not absolutely believe in the possible realization of his fears. Some clinical models of OCD view the disorder as inherently about doubting (e.g. O'Connor et al. 2005), and this is evident through Michael's use of epistemic modal auxiliaries, such as in metaphor 9 ("unholy forces might take over **my mind**") and metaphor 29 ("there might be some power behind **them**"). Michael tends to use these markers of uncertainty and possibility to construct the actions of unpredictable forces outside of his control. In contrast, he uses adverbs of certainty (e.g. "their beliefs were clearly childish and deluded") to position his knowledge of the reality of the situation as in opposition to his distressing thoughts and fears. This clash between his subjective experiences of OCD and his "objective" perception of reality also arguably allows Michael to persuade the researcher that he is a reliable, insightful participant.

Outside of the metaphors, Michael situates himself as knowledgeable about the symptomatology of OCD (e.g. "I understand is quite common in OCD people") and draws on an assumption of the researcher's clinical knowledge of other disorders (e.g. "I have SAD (although I didn't know that then)²"). Michael thus builds a relationship with the researcher based on shared expertise while also positioning his current knowledge of clinical disorders as more advanced and insightful than it was in the narrative time of the OCD episode. Michael also orients towards the discourse context by showing his awareness that the task was being completed for a research project. Immediately after metaphor cluster one, he states "I can think of one example that might be particularly helpful". The adjective "helpful" is an explicit inclusion of the researcher's perspective; Michael is acknowledging that his writing needs to fulfill the researcher's aims of finding out more about experiences of OCD.

4.5 Summary

Michael's written piece shows how metaphors can provide structure to key aspects of OCD episodes. Within the ideational metafunction, the vehicle groups

2 SAD is an acronym for Seasonal Affective Disorder.

in Michael's metaphors depict his mind, thoughts, emotions and the disorder itself as moving into and out of dynamic states of action. Combining this ideational metafunction with textual and interpersonal metafunctions, we also see that Michael's metaphors serve a variety of additional functions, primarily:

- creating cohesion between the opening and closing of the text;
- persuading the reader of the severity of his experiences;
- creating an identity as someone who currently suffers from OCD; and
- creating an identity as a rational person and a reliable participant.

However, the metaphors do not function independently of the remainder of Michael's text. In terms of the ideational metafunction, the non-metaphorical language in the text draws on lexical sets of darkness, magic and challenging social relationships. Against this backdrop, the metaphors used to describe Michael's OCD episode gain weight and credibility. The non-metaphorical language in the text also represents Michael as striving to be socially acceptable and morally correct, which strengthens the metaphors by setting up a sharp contrast between his desired, social self (that is not often represented metaphorically) and his distressing thoughts (that are often represented metaphorically). The non-metaphorical language in the text also performs textual and ideational metafunctions by helping Michael to cultivate intimacy with the researcher through claiming shared knowledge and to display an awareness of the research task in hand.

5 Concluding remarks

In this article, we have shown that the metaphors used by a research participant (Michael) when describing his experiences of OCD draw on vehicle groups of *MOVEMENT*, *CONTAINER* and *LOCATION/POSITION*. If we approach these metaphors from a representational perspective, they support previous research that has investigated metaphor use both by people with OCD (Fennell and Liberato 2007; Campbell and Longhurst 2013) and other mental health problems such as depression (e.g. Charteris-Black 2012). While a case study cannot allow us to comment on the general nature of metaphor use by people with OCD, it is worth noting briefly that many of the other participants in this study (who all had a clinical diagnosis of OCD) also used the vehicles of *MOVEMENT* and *CONTAINER* to describe their experiences of OCD. In addition, we have also demonstrated that Michael's metaphors do not only perform an ideational function, but they also serve interpersonal functions (such as creating an identity as someone who

suffers from OCD yet is a rational and reliable participant) and textual functions (such as creating cohesion). By focusing solely on the representational nature of metaphors, many studies overlook these important and context-sensitive functions of metaphor (see Deignan et al. 2013).

In this study, we have also shown how metaphors elicited in research tasks can display a clear orientation to the research context. For the context of Michael's text, the tenor is a relationship between the participant and the researcher, and the mode is a written, descriptive piece. While written modes arguably enable the creation of deliberate metaphors more so than spoken modes (Goatly 1997), the relationship between the participant(s) and the researcher(s) still exists regardless of whether the elicited data are collected via interviews, focus groups or other research-specific tasks. Metaphor analyses using elicited data therefore need greater consideration of the research context in order to capture the extensive range of functions that metaphors can perform in discourse.

As a further aim, we used Michael's written text to show how certain principles of the discourse dynamics approach to metaphor (Cameron and Deignan 2006; Cameron et al. 2009) – namely, that metaphor is dialogic and emerges sequentially in the discourse – can be usefully combined with an analysis of register (Halliday and Hasan 1985; Martin and Rose 2003) in order to account for the functions of metaphor and the construction of metaphor as the discourse progresses. The clearest links between the discourse dynamics approach and a systemic-functional approach to register can be seen in the textual metafunction. Here, metaphors in clusters build on one another (e.g. Koller 2003), thus emerging as a sequence of metaphors as the text progresses. However, the sequencing of metaphors also plays an ideational metafunction; in Michael's text, the vehicle group of *MOVEMENT* is repeatedly used to structure a variety of topics. With the addition of each metaphor, the “multivalency” of the metaphors builds up the representational strength of the vehicle group and creates a sense of equivalence between the related topics (Goatly 1997: 258). In terms of the interpersonal metafunction, the discourse dynamics approach regards metaphor as dialogic and oriented towards others (Cameron 2010). In Michael's text, identities are claimed and relationships are established with the researcher as the text moves through various sections that have different levels of metaphor density.

Additionally, taking a sequential approach to discourse means that metaphors cannot be divorced from their immediate co-text or the wider text in which they were constructed (Cameron et al. 2009). In this study, we have applied the analysis of register to both metaphorical and non-metaphorical language in order to capture how metaphors operate in conjunction with the surrounding

discourse. It has been shown how the non-metaphorical parts of Michael's text strengthen his metaphors by depicting a dramatic backdrop to his OCD episode and by creating persuasive contrasts between the non-metaphorically represented entities (e.g. his self) and the metaphorically represented entities (e.g. his thoughts, emotions and mind). Thus, it is important that metaphor studies also consider the contribution of the surrounding discourse to the meanings and functions of the metaphors.

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Bionotes

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